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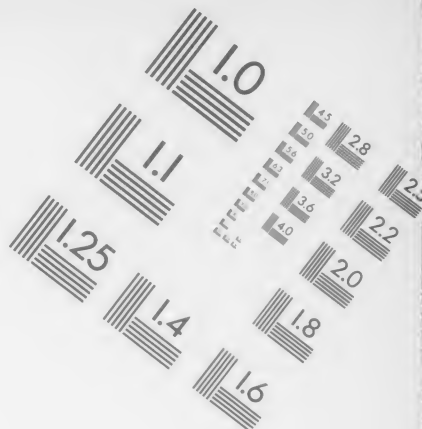
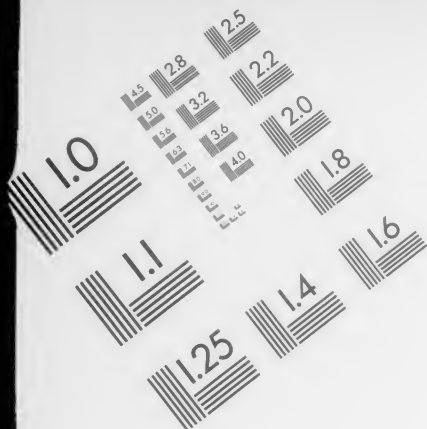


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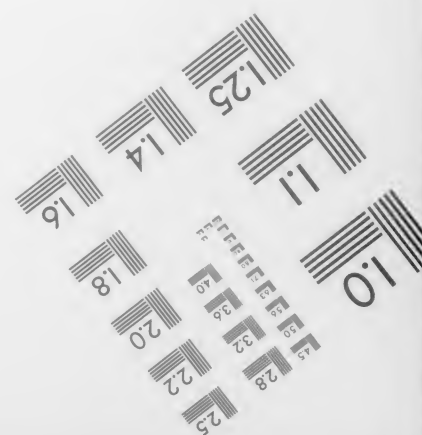
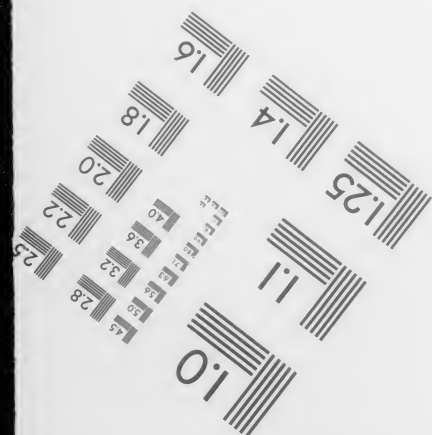
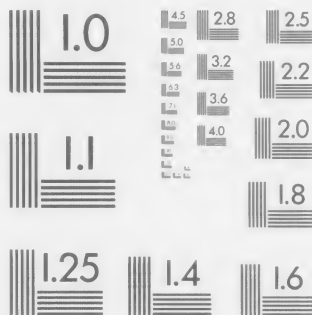
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ETHICAL ASSOCIATION.

“ O prodigality of life, blind waste
I’ the world, of power profuse without the will
To make life do its work, desire its day.”

—*Browning.*

THE greatest danger facing any new enterprise in speculative thought in these days is lest it should fail to attract its own soldiers to take active service under its colours. In nearly all modern reform movements there is this “blind waste of power” of which Browning speaks. It is due to the unwillingness of the average sympathizer to give more than a passive support to an intellectual conviction. This arises, primarily, from self-consciousness and from a feeling that, if a man cannot either speak or write, he is of no particular use, and is a hindrance rather than a help. Those who have such feelings in connection with the needs of the Ethical Movement had better forthwith renounce what is a mischievous heresy. If a school of rational thought is to be preserved in the land, every man and woman, however humble, who believes in high thinking and pure living is needed, and, indeed, none can be spared. A new movement stands in relation to its sympathizers in the same position as a thrifty housewife stands in regard to her husband’s earnings. The coins may not be of equal value or purchasing power, but each one, from bronze to gold, is needed in order to satisfy the full tale of her domestic requirements. The highest is not over-estimated, nor the lowest under-valued. The organizers of the English Ethical

Movement do actually so regard those whose convictions give them kinship with their cause. The fingers on the hand do not actually perform the same function, but each one is indispensable, the little not less than the big.

There are, of course, other causes for the refusal of men to join propagandist organizations, and these must be taken into consideration. Some men think themselves too big to take service along with those whom they regard as being lesser men. "Thought," they say, "is the important thing, and organizations are but methods, and, therefore, things of no particular moment. Others will join them and do the necessary work. Why, therefore, should I disturb the even tenour of my days?" Those, however, to whom conviction means duty take the opposite, the altruistic view, and say: "Someone must do this work, and, therefore, why not I?" In the difference expressed by these two positions lies the success or failure of such enterprises as our own. Those who take the latter view, and act upon it, thereby link themselves to collective humanity, and become co-partners in the efforts made to redeem it from mental slavery.

In reality, this preference for personal isolation hides a very gross form of self-conceit. It will not merge its individuality into that of the race, and it refuses to follow where it cannot lead. No sacrifice of individuality is implied in becoming a member of an "Ethical Society." Membership implies nothing more than a willing subordination of self to the idea that shapes a man's life. Without this self-mastery no progress is possible in organized rational thought, towards which, in its present state in England, no man should act the part of a sympathizing alien. It should be regarded as a privilege as well as a duty to "come over and help us." Social isolation is, indeed, justifiable during that period of self-interrogation which, in earnest men, always precedes the acceptance of new forms of thought; but when that period is over, and the hell of doubt has given place to the serene calm born of settled conviction—when the

windows of a man's mind have been opened, and the healthy breezes of moral enthusiasm have cleared away both dogma and doubt, his testimony belongs of right to those who are waiting for a sign.

Happily these difficulties only occur with the smaller men. The truly great are always humble. Nothing is more refreshing than to read the story of the life of Fichte. Here was a philosopher immersed in speculative subtleties, adored by his Jena students, full of authority and dignity, who could leave a course of lectures half delivered to take his place in the ranks of the private soldier in order to free the Fatherland. Mazzini, too, when he could no longer lead in Rome, remembered that he could use a rifle, and the great patriot marched to Garibaldi's legions with one on his shoulder. William Morris, also, great as craftsman, artist, and poet, but perhaps greatest of all as man, was not above taking his place in the ranks of the workmen in a procession to Hyde Park. Next to the duty of knowing when and how to lead there is nothing of more importance than knowing when and how to follow.

Again, the mind which, after much prospecting, discovers a vein of intellectual wealth, retires within itself to nurse it as the miser nurses his gold, is debasing truth, and is, in addition, a victim to the most ignoble form of personal gluttony. When invited to share his possessions with the poor in wisdom, he goes away sorrowing. The prevalent religious philosophy of our day is built entirely upon this worship of self. It is individualistic to the core, in that it centres round the unit instead of round the race. The mission in life of the ordinary believer is to save himself, to "storm the gates of heaven with shocks of prayer" that *he* may be saved. The philosophy of the Ethical Movement requires more of a man than this. It not only demands of him that his life shall be clean and his thoughts pure, but that his principles shall be incarnated in action for the good of all. It asks not for a slice of man's fortune, but for a slice of his life. To rid the

mind of the cramping superstitions of the Churches is not enough. That is an elementary duty which every man owes to his brain and to the labours of the past ; he learns it in the kindergarten of the new life ; but the high school of perfection can be reached only through exercise and discipline, through absolute self-devotion, and perfect, passionate faith in the redeeming power of personal service. It does not, as Dr. Holmes used to say, so much matter where you stand as in what direction you are moving, and the ethic which exalts a nation consists not alone in deciding how to live, but also in living according to your highest conception of life. Goethe insisted that without earnestness there is nothing done in life, and he complained that even among men of culture he often found but little earnestness. "They live," he said, "as they read a heap of newspapers, only to be done with them. When I become acquainted with a man my first inquiry is, With what does he occupy himself, and how, and with what degree of perseverance ? The answer regulates the interest I take in that man for life."

The Ethical Movement has to propose for acceptance by the world a new vision of life. It implies a readjustment of the old moral standards. It teaches, not that honesty is the best policy, but that theft is unmanly, and that it robs the thief of the very happiness he seeks. It is a gospel of character, not of opinion. It looks to education as the lever by which we may the better realize life and its manifold aspirations ; but it does not regard education as a mere accomplishment, a synonym of good breeding. Properly understood, education is a tuning fork which blends the physical impulses into harmony with moral aspirations. It draws out the hidden and undeveloped powers of personality, the "power profuse, to make life do its work, desire its day."

We have it in our power to enter the Twentieth Century with a movement which, if we work wisely and work well, will leave its impress on every department of life. The

work before us is great enough for our united efforts ; let us beware lest we are too small for it.

We cannot all take equal place in the world of thought, or equal responsibility as directors of human energy ; but we can all help according to our capacities. One man can give wealth, a second power of brain, a third can give strength of arm, and all can give their full measure of human sympathy. We therefore earnestly invite all those who believe in the principles expressed by this journal to become active helpers in their advancement. It is as unwise for a man to live apart from his own community, to isolate himself from the unanimity of conviction for which he is shaped, as it would be for the wolf to leave the pack or the lamb the fold. Active association with our aims and endeavours is, therefore, our first great need ; without this nothing can be done. The great master, whose words burn like live coals in the hearts of those who have caught his wonderful message, tells us that "Association centuples your strength ; it makes the thoughts of others and the progress of others your own, while it elevates and sanctifies your nature through the affections and the growing sentiment of the unity of the human family. In proportion as your association with your brother men is extended, in proportion as it is intimate and comprehensive, will you advance on the path of individual improvement. The law of life cannot be fulfilled in its entirety save by the united labour of all. For every step taken in progress, for every new discovery of a portion of that law, history shows a corresponding extension of human association, a more extended contact and communication between peoples and peoples."

Copies of this pamphlet may be obtained from W. Sanders at Surrey House, Victoria Embankment, London, W.C. Price $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per copy post free ; 100 copies post free for 6s. 3d.

Persons wishing to become associated with the Ethical Movement are requested to communicate with Mr. Sanders at above address.